



WESTERN LONG ISLAND AQUIFER COMMITTEE

P.O. Box 864

Port Washington, NY 11050

Tel: 516/767.9151 Fax: 516/883.2066

An extension of the Manhasset Neck and Great Neck Aquifer Committee formed to address regional issues

February 9, 2016

Hon. Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly

LOB 932

Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Steve Englebright
Chair, Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee

LOB 621

Albany, NY 12248

Hon. John Flanagan
Senate Majority Leader
Room 330, State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Speaker Heastie, Assemblyman Englebright and Senator Flanagan:

We write to you with regard to important concerns about the drinking water supply of Long Island's 3 million residents. It has been literally decades since a major regional investigation of groundwater conditions has been conducted. Now, numerous trends are culminating to create a picture of both groundwater quality and quantity declines that afflict Nassau County and areas along its borders - - e.g., western Long Island.

The sustainability of Long Island's drinking water supply may be at a tipping point, in that it appears that it is threatened by issues such as possible irreversible salt water intrusion, nitrogen contamination, reduced groundwater recharge, and the migration of industrial contamination plumes. Our water resource managers and policymakers need detailed scientific information and dynamic resource management tools to help them respond to these growing, and changing, threats to Long Island's long-term sustainability.

We face mounting threats from toxic contamination. For more than five years, Long Islanders have read about the most toxic superfund site in the state, the Navy/Grumman site in Bethpage, Nassau County. It has taken intervention by U.S. Senator Charles Schumer to prevent contamination of more drinking water wells down gradient from the current plume. Nassau County has approximately 150 superfund sites, the most of any county in New York State. Suffolk has over 100 sites. Recently, *The New York Times Magazine* (January 6, 2016)¹ published an extensive expose on the release of a toxic industrial chemical, PFOA into the drinking water of West Virginia, which killed animals and humans exposed to it in drinking water or exposed by working around it. The article noted that Nassau County was a location where high levels of PFOA are present in the drinking water in amounts higher than those discovered in West Virginia. In addition, Suffolk County and to a lesser degree Nassau County is confronted with nitrogen loading

¹ Nathaniel Rich, "The Lawyer Who Became DuPont's Worst Nightmare," *The New York Times Magazine*, January 6, 2016.

to groundwater that has resulted fish kills and coastal water impairment, and which requires increasing levels of treatment by water suppliers.

As an island, Long Island is vulnerable to saltwater intrusion. Saltwater is advancing toward both the north and south shores of Nassau County, putting a number of drinking water wells at risk of irreversible chloride contamination. Nassau is experiencing significant saltwater intrusion into all three of its aquifers, even the Lloyd Aquifer. It has been decades since a fresh look at this regional problem has been undertaken, and with the rapid rise in sea level due to climate change, we must seriously address the potential that intrusion may be much closer to essential public water supply wells than we know. Recent discoveries of saltwater advances suggest that this is in fact the case.

Groups such as LICAP and the Nassau County Water Resource Board have recently been formed to bring expert minds together to combat these threats, and New York State has committed \$5 million to the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan. These groups are hamstrung by a lack of critical data, such as the current location of the saltwater interface that threatens our coastal supply wells, and the tools to effectively shape new management plans and policy.

We, the undersigned, urge the NYS Legislature to act now to fund the management tool described in “Analysis of the Hydrogeologic Framework, Groundwater Availability and Water –Supply Sustainability of Western Long Island,” prepared by Frederick Stumm and Paul E. Misut of the USGS. The study will yield a publicly accessible, predictive modeling tool, built on current scientific data, providing Long Island water suppliers and policymakers the information they need to respond to these growing threats and to manage the long term health of our shared water supply. The benefits of such a tool cannot be over-stated.

The project will take 2.5 years and cost \$3.2 million dollars. This investment will save taxpayers from the penalties of higher water treatment costs, well abandonment and relocation, and the compounding health impacts that are associated with water contamination. We are asking that the state fund this project so that it can be initiated this calendar year. We need your help to make this project happen. Long Island can no longer function without a detailed and accurate picture of what is happening to our groundwater and why. It is not economically feasible for the suppliers to fund the study on their own. Please be our advocates and secure this funding.

A copy of the proposal is attached.

Thank you.

Cc: Nassau County Senate Delegation and Nassau County Assembly Majority Delegation

Sincerely,

Nassau County
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Nassau County Legislature

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Nassau County Legislature

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Nassau County Legislature

Nassau County (Cont.)

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McKim de Guzman, Lloyd Harbor, NY

Phebe de Guzman, Lloyd Harbor, NY

Brenda Reiss, LWV Huntington, NY

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Patricia Fuchs, Huntington, NY

Erica Waterman, Huntington, NY

Bill Seevers, Environmental Technology Group, Hauppauge NY.

Gina Mormile, Lloyd Neck NY

Ellyn Pflug, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724.

Barbara Carey, Lloyd Neck, NY 11743

Julia de Guzman, Lloyd Harbor, NY 11743

Sandra Reilly, Lloyd Harbor, NY 11743

Paul Basso

Peter and Virginia Murphy, Lloyd Harbor, NY 12743

Mark Underwood Lloyd Harbor, NY